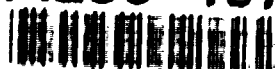


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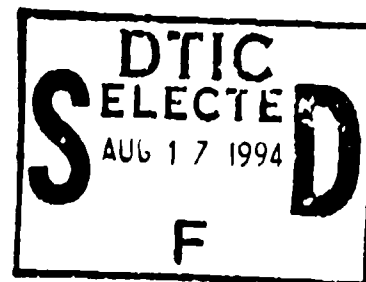
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NAVAL WAR COLLEGE
Newport, Rhode Island

OPERATIONAL ART IN THE LITTORALS

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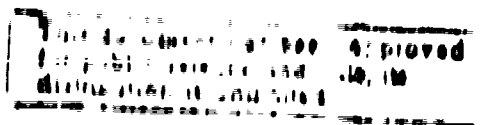
ROBERT L. HAYES III
Lieutenant Colonel, U.S. Marine Corps



A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Joint Operations.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

Signature: *Robert L. Hayes III*



17 June 1994

Paper directed by Captain D. Watson
Chairman, Department of Joint Operations

94-25891



DISCONTINUED

94 8 16 075

REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

1a. REPORT SECURITY CLASSIFICATION UNCLASSIFIED			1b. RESTRICTIVE MARKINGS		
1. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION AUTHORITY			3. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY OF REPORT DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT A: APPROVED FOR PUBLIC RELEASE; DISTRIBUTION IS UNLIMITED.		
2b. DECLASSIFICATION/DOWNGRADING SCHEDULE			5. MONITORING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER(S)		
4. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER(S)			7a. NAME OF MONITORING ORGANIZATION		
6a. NAME OF PERFORMING ORGANIZATION OPERATIONS DEPARTMENT		6b. OFFICE SYMBOL (If applicable) C	7b. ADDRESS (City, State, and ZIP Code)		
6c. ADDRESS (City, State, and ZIP Code) NAVAL WAR COLLEGE NEWPORT, R.I. 02841			9. PROCUREMENT INSTRUMENT IDENTIFICATION NUMBER		
8a. NAME OF FUNDING/SPONSORING ORGANIZATION		8b. OFFICE SYMBOL (If applicable)	10. SOURCE OF FUNDING NUMBERS		
8c. ADDRESS (City, State, and ZIP Code)		PROGRAM ELEMENT NO.	PROJECT NO.	TASK NO.	WORK UNIT ACCESSION NO.
11. TITLE (Include Security Classification) OPERATIONAL ART IN THE LITTORALS (v)					
12. PERSONAL AUTHOR(S) LIEUTENANT COLONEL ROBERT L. HAYES III, U.S. MARINE CORPS					
a. TYPE OF REPORT FINAL		13b. TIME COVERED FROM TO		14. DATE OF REPORT (Year, Month, Day) 1994 May 16	
				15. PAGE COUNT 31	
16. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTATION A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Operations. The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.					
17. COSATI CODES			18. SUBJECT TERMS (Continue on reverse if necessary and identify by block number)		
FIELD	GROUP	SUB-GROUP	NEED FOR OPERATIONAL ART; OPERATIONAL ART DEFINED; HISTORICAL ANALYSIS; MODERN FRAMEWORK		
19. ABSTRACT (Continue on reverse if necessary and identify by block number) The Department of the Navy's white paper, "... From the Sea" must unmistakably be viewed as a viable warfighting doctrine, requiring studied application of operational art. Nevertheless, little has been written concerning the application of maritime operational art to the naval services' new concept. Naval service officers, who doubtless will function as "firemen" in a crisis response situation, and as members of a Joint Task Force or joint force for more sustained operations, must clearly understand the operational level of war, and how to apply operational art. To assist in operational conceptualization, four key questions are employed as a general framework. Other valuable concepts of operational design are centers of gravity, decisive points, culmination, commander's intent, and operational fires, all synthesized under the genre of the naval campaign. The Marianas campaign, conducted in the Pacific during World War II, is a classic model of a naval campaign which integrated air, land, and sea forces, and which embodied virtually all of the tenets of the operational art, and is instructive to today's Navy and Marine Corps officers. Moreover, other valuable aspects of modern operational design are useful: the commander's estimate, the campaign					
20. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY OF ABSTRACT <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNCLASSIFIED/UNLIMITED <input type="checkbox"/> SAME AS RPT <input type="checkbox"/> DTIC USERS			21. ABSTRACT SECURITY CLASSIFICATION UNCLASSIFIED		
a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE INDIVIDUAL CHAIRMAN, OPERATIONS DEPARTMENT			22b. TELEPHONE (Include Area Code) 841-3414		22c. OFFICE SYMBOL C

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Abstract of

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PREFACE

The Department of the Navy's white paper "...From the Sea" is an intriguing publication, and has inspired much written debate regarding its intent and implications. I also was interested in the meaning of "...From the Sea", but more in a warfighting context: how, exactly, will this work in an operational setting? Initially expecting to be inundated with written material on the subject, I soon found myself exploring new ground. Although many articles have been written from the perspective of individual communities of the naval service, no overarching, synergistic conceptualization has been developed, especially at the operational level of war.

Therefore, the scope of this paper is not to address in detail the many tactical problems that bedevil littoral operations, such as counter-mine warfare, or even the very relevant debate concerning the integration of the Commander, Landing Force into the composite warfare structure. Rather, the scope is limited to the application of pertinent concepts of the operational art to the notion of littoral warfare.

Accordingly, the idea of operational art is defined to serve as a common point of departure, along with interpretations of key concepts of operational design. Additionally, a naval campaign of World War II is included, because, though the Navy has been accused of inward, community focus, it has, in fact, masterfully conducted an extremely complex campaign in World War II, which embodied the tenets of modern operational thought, and from which today's Navy and Marine officers can learn much.

Finally, I would like to express my appreciation to the library staff, whose helpfulness and courteous service helped to make this paper possible.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Take this simple test: the Department of the Navy's white paper, "...From the Sea", is: (a) a thinly veneered attempt to prove the Navy's adaptability and continued relevance in the post-Cold War world; (b) a radically new warfighting concept, requiring studied application of maritime operational art.¹

The central theme of the white paper, in which a new direction for the naval service was envisioned, is a "fundamental shift away from open ocean warfighting on the sea towards joint operations conducted from the sea." Key principles include joint operations on the world's littorals ranging from forward presence to crisis response to large-scale expeditionary operations in support of sustained conflict. Critical to the shift in emphasis is restructuring of the naval service and rethinking naval operational and tactical concepts.²

The Department of the Navy's new focus has spawned a plethora of complex questions and issues, foremost of which is the basic *raison d'etre* for "...From the Sea": is it merely a politically tinged public relations ploy, or a genuinely new strategic and operational concept for the employment of naval forces? Captain Brad Hayes, U. S. Navy, postulates that while the most obvious answer is that the white paper is the naval services' response to the changing post-Cold War strategic landscape, other, more subtle factors, were also initiates for "...From the Sea". One such reason was the Navy's perceived need to respond to the Air Force's aggressive white paper, "Global Reach, Global Power"; another was the Navy's suspicion of institutional

perception by Congress that the Navy was less-than-enthusiastic towards the implementation of the Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act.³ Nevertheless, political maneuverings notwithstanding, "...From the Sea" must be viewed as more than simply a statement of service relevance. It is clearly a viable warfighting doctrine, one which requires skilled, adept application of the operational art in the littorals.

Defining the Issue. Other vexing issues remain: what, specifically, is meant by the "littoral"? Casual attempts to correlate "littoral" to "coastal", or inferences to operations conducted in shallow or "green" water are self-limiting; while certain types of operations may, in fact, be conducted in coastal areas, other operations conducted under the aegis of "...From the Sea" may far exceed such a limited spatial dimension.⁴ Recently published Naval Doctrine Publication 1 (NDP 1) defines "littoral" as "those regions relating to or existing on a shore or coastal region within direct control of and vulnerable to, the striking power of naval expeditionary forces."⁵

Another critical concern, corollary to the notion of exclusive focus on the littorals, is a perception of abandonment of means to ensure control of sea lines of communication, which are the lifeline to a maritime expeditionary force.⁶ However, protection of a seaborne expeditionary force or amphibious force and its associated lines of supply and communication, is an implied task in the conduct of amphibious operations, and is recognized as absolutely vital towards mission accomplishment.

Yet another valid issue focuses on the relative cheapness and proliferation of naval mines, in addition to dangerous anti-shipping missiles such as SILKWORM,

EXOCET, and other weapons. Do these threats render obsolete littoral operations in general, and amphibious operations in particular? Unmistakably, these weapons present grave threats to a naval expeditionary force. But to blithely equate future amphibious operations with the ponderous, "smashmouth" landings conducted against Tarawa and other tiny atolls during World War II is to ignore the reality that tactics, techniques, and technologies of the attack have dramatically changed.⁷

Accordingly, encapsulating these key qualifiers into an warfighting context, "...From the Sea" can be operationally conceptualized as "conducting joint synergistic operations relative to land and sea control on or near the littorals of a hostile or potentially hostile nation at the time and place of our choosing in support of national or theater objectives."

Implications. Many differing interpretations of "...From the Sea" have been written, along with its ramifications for various communities of the naval service. Regrettably, a subject not extensively addressed in professional journals is the application of maritime operational art to littoral operations. This is indeed a cause for concern, for as Lieutenant Colonel William C. Smith, U. S. Marine Corps, correctly observes,

Naval commanders will, on many occasions, be first on scene. They must understand how to link strategic aims with operational decisions to ensure tactical actions are relevant--all the while acting in a complex joint and combined environment.⁸

For naval service officers, this patently implies the requirement for a clear understanding of the operational level of war, and the studied application of the tenets of the operational art.

Operational Art and Design. Joint Pub 3-0 defines the operational level of war as that which links the tactical employment of forces to strategic objectives. Strategy is the art and science of employing armed forces and other instruments of national power to secure national goals or objectives;⁹ tactics is the art and science of employing available means to win battles and engagements.¹⁰ The operational level of war connects the strategic and tactical levels by the employment of military forces to achieve strategic goals through the design, organization, and execution of campaigns and major operations.¹¹

Operational art, as defined by the Army's FM 100-5, is

"the skillful employment of military forces to attain strategic and/or operational objectives within a theater through the design, organization, integration, and conduct of theater strategies, campaigns, and battles...Operational art requires broad vision, the ability to anticipate..."¹²

Joint Pub 3-0 further states that operational art helps to determine when, where, and for what purpose major forces will be employed. To assist the commander in determining conditions for victory before seeking battle, a general framework of four key questions is offered:

- (1) What military (or related political and social) conditions must be produced in the operational area to achieve the strategic goals?
- (2) What sequence of actions is most likely to produce that condition?

(3) How should the resources of the joint force be applied to accomplish that sequence of events?

(4) What is the likely cost or risk to the joint force in performing that sequence of events?¹³

Additionally, FM 100-5 and the Marine Corps' FMFM 1 offer several valuable concepts of operational design:

- o The *center of gravity* is defined as "the hub of all power and movement": the characteristic, capability, or location from which both enemy and friendly forces draw freedom of action, strength, or will.¹⁴ Centers of gravity may exist at both the strategic and operational level, and may change. Hence, the essence of the operational art lies in identifying the relevant centers of gravity, and correctly applying combat power against the enemy's center of gravity while protecting our own.

- o Closely related to the concept of the center of gravity is an important tenet outlined in FMFM 1: that of exploiting the enemy's *critical vulnerabilities*. Clearly, friendly forces stand a much better chance of success by concentrating strength against an enemy's weakness, rather than directly attacking his strength¹⁵, or center of gravity. Therefore, identifying and attacking a critical vulnerability is a means to *indirectly* strike a blow or series of blows at the enemy's center of gravity.

- o *Decisive points* are other ways towards the end of ultimately dismantling the enemy's center of gravity; if controlled, they provide commanders with a marked advantage over the enemy, and are usually geographic in nature. Examples may be a constricted sea lane, air base, or key terrain.¹⁶

o The notion of *focus of main effort* assists the operational commander to identify that element in his command most critical to success, and to concentrate decisive combat power at the crucial time in support of the focus of effort.¹⁷

o Another aspect of operational design is that of *culmination* and its opposite number, the operational pause. Offensively, the culminating point is defined as the point in time at which the attacker's combat power no longer exceeds that of the defender, causing the attacker to risk counterattack and defeat.¹⁸ Conversely, an operational pause is a temporary halt, without surrendering initiative, to avoid reaching a culmination point or to generate additional combat power.¹⁹

The classic principles of war, as enumerated in the doctrinal manuals of all services, also provide guidelines for operational design. Of these, the principle *objective* merits special consideration. Every military operation should be directed towards a clearly defined, decisive, and attainable objective. A helpful mechanism for conveying the objective is by means of the *commanders's Intent*, which describes the commander's desired result of an operation, or end state. Though an operational or tactical situation may change, rendering a specific, assigned task obsolete, the intent continues to guide friendly actions, ensuring ultimate compliance with the commander's desires.

Another valuable tool is the employment of operational fires. Not to be confused with fire support or interdiction, which are closely coordinated with maneuver or other battlefield activities, operational fires are designed to achieve a decisive impact on the conduct of a major operation or campaign. Operational fires

can help to shape the battlefield by destroying or neutralizing key enemy capabilities or assets such as his command and control infrastructure, critical airfields, or weapons systems.²⁰

A key mechanism for linking and synthesizing these useful but varied concepts is the campaign, specifically the naval campaign, defined as:

an operation or connected series of operations conducted essentially by naval forces...It could be described as implementation of a broad strategic concept, with progressive tactical and logistical effort, or a series of naval operations by one or several task forces coordinated to attain a specific, final objective.²¹

A naval campaign may be the main national effort, or a supporting effort related to continental operations.²²

CHAPTER II

A HISTORICAL PROTOTYPE: THE MARIANAS CAMPAIGN, 1944

Operation FORAGER, conducted from 11 June until 8 August 1944 to secure the Marianas Islands, is a classic model of a naval campaign which embodied virtually all of the tenets of operational art. It clearly manifested the operational concepts of "...From the Sea", as were earlier conceptualized: a joint task force, commanded by a naval officer, and which consisted of Navy combat, transport, and logistic elements, Marine and Army ground forces, and aviation elements from each service, conducted operations from the sea, at times and places of its choosing, on the littorals of formidable enemy-held islands to ensure both sea, air, and land control in support of strategic objectives.

Overview. The strategic setting for FORAGER grew out of a squabble between General MacArthur and Admirals King, Chief of Naval Operations, and Nimitz, Commander-in-Chief, Pacific. MacArthur pressed for his Southwest Pacific force to be the strategic main effort, driving to the Philippines via New Guinea. Nimitz, who had already initiated the second of the two-pronged U. S. strategic offensive, the Central Pacific drive, argued that his Central Pacific forces should continue westward toward Luzon. Ultimately, the Joint Chiefs of Staff directed MacArthur to continue his advance, and for Nimitz to occupy the Marianas and continue to the Palaus.²³ See Figure 1.

Geostrategically, the Marianas posed daunting problems for Navy and Marine planners, many of which are not unlike those which will confront today's naval

expeditionary commanders. The objective area was 1,017 miles from the nearest advanced base, a coral atoll which was little more than an anchorage. Moreover, the Marianas lay 3,500 miles from Pearl Harbor-- the initial leap to Saipan was expeditionary in the truest sense.²⁴ The Marianas archipelago itself stretches for 500 miles, though only the three largest islands, Saipan, Tinian, and Guam, located in the south of the chain, were usable as air and naval bases. Topographically, these three islands stood in stark contrast to the tiny atolls which the Navy-Marine Corps team had previously conquered. Saipan was fifteen miles long and five miles wide; Tinian, twelve miles by six miles; and Guam, located 100 miles south of Tinian, was 34 miles long and averaged seven miles in width. Each of the islands was characterized by devilish combinations of jungled mountains, cultivated lowlands, and swamps. Additionally, Saipan and Tinian were occupied by numerous settlers loyal to Japan, who, with Japanese troops, had developed roads, towns, airfields, and other infrastructure.²⁵ See Figure 2.

Japanese defenses in the islands were formidable, and numbered 32,000 troops on Saipan alone. Neighboring Tinian was garrisoned by 12,000 Japanese, and Guam was defended by 19,000 troops.²⁶ Each of these islands was defended in varying degrees by anti-boat mines and obstacles, and long-range coastal guns. Additionally, the newly reorganized Japanese fleet, dubbed the First Mobile Fleet, featured 9 carriers as its main striking arm, and lurked near Borneo, waiting to engage in Mahanian decisive battle with the U. S. Pacific Fleet.

Operations against the Marianas commenced in March, with air bombardment of the islands by land-based aircraft. On 11 June, U. S. carriers launched devastatingly effective strikes from 200 miles on the three main islands, and on 15 June 1944, Saipan was assaulted. Meanwhile, Ozawa's fleet, sensing an opportunity to destroy the Americans at the Marianas, sortied from the Sulu Archipelago and was detected on 15 June by a U. S. submarine. Sensing a threat to the operation, the U. S. commander, Admiral Spruance, canceled landings on Guam, tentatively scheduled for 18 June, and U. S. naval forces moved to intercept Ozawa. The resulting Battle of the Philippine Sea, fought 19-20 June, seriously crippled the Japanese, particularly their naval aviation assets. However, Spruance opted to ensure protection of the landing force instead of pursuing the Japanese, and did not destroy Ozawa. Saipan was finally secured on 9 July. Subsequently, Guam was assaulted on 21 July, and Tinian invaded on 24 July. In November 1944, the first B-29 raid was launched from Saipan against the Japanese mainland.²⁷

The Strategic-Operational Link. Admiral King had long recognized the Marianas as a strategic key to conquering the Western Pacific.²⁸ The enemy's strategic center of gravity, the "hub of all power" on which Japanese aims depended, was her fleet. Accordingly, King directed Nimitz to "occupy the Marianas" to achieve four purposes: first, to interdict Japanese sea communication; second, to secure bases from which long-range air attacks against Japan could be launched; third, to secure bases from which to pierce Japan's inner defenses; and fourth, to isolate and neutralize the Caroline Islands, which harbored the formidable Japanese naval base at Truk.²⁹ In

essence, power projection was employed to gain strategic sea control; the Marianas island group was a strategic decisive point.

Nimitz passed the mission, and the purposes, to the operational commander, Admiral Spruance. Accordingly, the first of the four critical questions which an operational commander should address can be answered: the military conditions required to achieve the strategic goals were neutralization of Japanese defenses on Saipan, Tinian, and Guam; and local sea control, relative to both sea lines of communication and protection of the expeditionary force.

The Operational-Tactical Link. How did Spruance, as the operational commander, link tactical engagements to achieve strategic goals? Through skillful design of a naval campaign, Spruance efficiently organized his theater of operations, and phased his tactical actions to dismantle the Japanese center of gravity while protecting his own, as well as to avoid culmination. He effectively allocated his resources, and evaluated and minimized the risk to his force.

Operational centers of gravity were correctly assessed; Spruance recognized that own center of gravity was his landing force, which was extremely vulnerable, first while embarked in the helpless transports, and then in the embryonic stages of the amphibious assault, and without which he could not have accomplished his mission. The enemy's center of gravity was initially the collective Japanese garrisons on the islands. However, with the arrival of Ozawa's massive fleet into the theater, the Japanese center of gravity shifted. Spruance correctly surmised that he had to

address that threat, and though he did not destroy it, damaged it enough to protect his own center of gravity, thereby ensuring mission accomplishment.

At this point, we can answer the second of the four modern critical questions: what sequence of actions is most likely to produce the strategic goals? In order to systematically dismantle the enduring Japanese center of gravity, the island garrisons, Spruance exploited the chief enemy critical vulnerability: though individually strong, they could not mutually support each other, allowing sequential defeat in detail. Therefore, first, and continuous, was to establish local sea control to isolate and protect the objective area and ensure freedom of action; second, the massive application of operational fires to destroy high value targets such as Japanese airfields and aircraft, and attrit the enemy garrisons; and third, the application of overwhelming combat power, at times and locations favorable to the attacker, to neutralize the Japanese garrisons. Spruance refined the sequence into specific phases of his campaign: first, the devastating air bombardment, which clearly was designed to help shape the battlefield for the tactical commanders. The next phases were landing and combat operations to secure the Islands: Saipan was attacked first, because it was 100 miles closer to Japan, allowing for earlier preparation of air bases once seized, and also because its valuable air bases would be denied to northern-based Japanese air assets attempting to influence the battle. Clearly, Saipan was an operational decisive point. Invasion dates for Tinian and Guam were contingent upon completion of operations on Saipan. Tinian was to be taken by the same forces that had secured

Salpan, and Guam was to be invaded tentatively of 18 June by a separate force from that assaulting Salpan and Tinian.²⁰

Operational organization and command structure is a critical aspect of the operational art, and FORAGER demonstrated clear, unencumbered lines of command and responsibility. Spruance was in supreme, singular command, answering to Nimitz. Tactical command was vested in three major elements under Spruance: the Joint Expeditionary Force, which were the amphibious forces, commanded by Admiral Kelly Turner; the Fast Carrier Forces, designated Task Force 58, under Marc Mitscher, and assigned to cover and support the operation; and the land-based aircraft under Vice Admiral Hoover. The amphibious element was divided into two attack forces: the Northern Attack Force, which Turner himself commanded, and which included Lieutenant General Holland Smith's V Amphibious Corps, was tasked to secure Salpan and Tinian. The Southern Attack Force, commanded by Rear Admiral Connaly, included the III Amphibious Corps, which was tasked to secure Guam. A General Reserve, the 77th Division, U.S. Army, was also designated.²¹

Assignment of forces to tasks reveals insight into the third key question: how should resources of the joint force be applied to accomplish the sequence? Clearly, Spruance was allocated sufficient means to achieve strategic ends, and he then masterfully applied his resources within his theater of operations. He optimized the use of his finite assets by phasing his assaults, allowing sequential massing against the isolated Japanese garrisons. Turner's Northern Attack Group was allotted the 2d and 4th Marine Divisions and the Army's 27th Division, ultimately 71,000 troops, to

secure Saipan. Though resistance was fierce and progress was slow, the force ratio proved adequate. Two of the Marine divisions which had assaulted Saipan were tasked to subsequently seize Tinian. The assault on Guam was originally envisioned to be conducted solely by the 3d Marine Division, but because of the ferocity of Japanese resistance on Saipan, the 77th Division was allocated to the Southern Force, an astute employment of the operational reserve, conceived to ensure mass against the enemy on Guam. Each of these tactical formations enjoyed force multipliers in the form of significant naval gunfire and air support. As another indicator of effective resource management, Spruance funneled assets to his operational *schwerpunkt*, or focus of main effort, which changed during the campaign. Initially, the focus was the landing force on Saipan. Recognizing the distinct threat posed by Ozawa, he diverted Task Force 58, which became the new focus of main effort. Subsequently, assets were channeled back to the landing forces, and sequentially applied against the islands.

Having analyzed the sequence of events and allocation of resources, the fourth key question must be addressed: what was the risk to the force? Three tangible examples illustrate Spruance's appreciation of operational risk, and measures taken to minimize them:

- o First, though later criticized for having allowed Ozawa's fleet to escape, at the time Spruance did not realize the degree that Smith's Marines had solidified their beachhead, and felt that protection of the extremely vulnerable landing was the priority. Clearly, he never lost sight of his immediate operational objective, and his

own center of gravity, and demonstrated when, where, and for what purpose to give battle.

o Second, based on the new threat posed by Ozawa, and the unexpected ferocity of the Japanese resistance on Saipan, Spruance recognized that he could not adequately support the landing on Guam as originally scheduled. Accordingly, to prevent culmination, he instituted an operational pause, then reinforced the Southern Attack Group to ensure that he had adequate combat power to mass against Guam.

o Third, he recognized that the tactical plan to seize Tinian, favored by Admiral Turner, was flawed. Turner sought to attack directly into the strength of the Japanese defenses, located in the south of the island, and covering the best landing beaches. A dispute had developed between Turner and General Smith, who proposed conducting a deception operation in the south of Tinian, heavily defended by mines and coastal batteries, and landing in the north of the island on two extremely narrow but undefended beaches. Spruance recognized that the enemy critical vulnerability on Tinian was his poor tactical deployment, which precluded him from defending in the north, and directed that the landings be conducted on the lightly defended beaches. The landing force achieved complete surprise, resulting in relatively easy seizure of Tinian.

CHAPTER 3

A FRAMEWORK FOR TODAY

Consistent with the thematic operational conceptualization of "...From the Sea", how can the modern naval service commander implement the tenets of operational art and design? The four key questions provide a framework on which to hang modern applications.

What Conditions Must Be Produced in the Operational Area to Achieve Strategic Goals? Obviously, each particular operational situation will be different, requiring unique analysis of strategic goals and intent, and the ultimate end state required to achieve them. However, naval service commanders must realize that the operational level of war is not necessarily determined by any specific force size, but by the objectives to be attained.³² Hence, consistent with the current United States National Military Strategy of forward presence and crisis response³³, the commanders of an Amphibious Ready Group (ARG) and its associated Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable) (MEU (SOC)) could find themselves as the initial U. S. forces on the scene in a crisis. Furthermore, based on the nature of the crisis, the ARG may be the *only* force tasked to achieve strategic objectives.

Operation SHARP EDGE, the non-combatant evacuation operation to rescue personnel from Liberia, and which extended from 25 May 1990 until 9 January 1991, is a perfect example. Though for the operation, the Commander, Sixth Fleet was designated as the Commander, Joint Task Force, and was in fact embarked in one of the amphibious ships, much of the planning was conducted by the officers of the

expeditionary force. Initially, because of confused, misleading reports from the embassy, MEU (SOC) planners at the major-lieutenant colonel level were required to assess the cultural and strategic landscape in Liberia, and determine the requirements for success, along with a sequence of actions and tasks designed to accomplish the mission.³⁴

On the other hand, the white paper postulates that Navy and Marine forces must also be prepared to function as "enabling forces", which can "seize and defend an adversary's port, naval bases, or coastal air base to allow the entry of Army or Air Force forces."³⁵ This clearly implies a completely different "end game" from that of a non-combatant evacuation.

What Sequence of Actions Is Most Likely to Provide That Condition? This next logical step, determination of the ways to produce the end, flows naturally from determination of the end state, and will, of course, also be situationally dependant. Nevertheless, as exemplified by Admiral Spruance in the Marianas, the general sequence should focus on critical enemy factors or vulnerabilities, the exploitation of which will lead ultimately to disintegration of the enemy's center of gravity. Simultaneously, we can expect the enemy to attack friendly vulnerabilities; the sequence of events must also ensure our own center of gravity is protected.

An invaluable analytic tool which systematically aids in assessing the overall situation is the commanders estimate or estimate of the situation. The first step, mission analysis, is arguably the most important. During the first step, the assigned mission is carefully dissected to ensure precise understanding of the *specific* tasks

which have been assigned to the operational commander. Concurrently, the operational commander must fully grasp the intent of the next higher authority: for what purpose is the task being done? Equally important, implied tasks will also be deduced by the operational commander: those tasks, which are not specifically assigned, but are recognized by the operational commander as clearly necessary to carry out the stated tasks. ³⁶ Juxtaposed against a thorough evaluation of all aspects of the enemy, to include land, sea, and air capabilities, and considering assets available, these tasks, when prioritized, may become the basis for the sequence of events.

However, unless the sequence of events remains tightly focused towards attainment of strategic or operational objectives, it may be, as William Lind points out, "little more than floundering from one battle to another," under the mistaken idea that "if one wins enough battles, one must win strategically".³⁷ A method to fuse events together is by means of a campaign plan, which is a statement of the commander's design. It may give focus and priority to the sequence of operations by implementing phases, which should relate each action as an essential component in a connected string of events, related in cause and effect,³⁸ as was exemplified in the Marianas campaign.

How Should the Resources of the Joint Force Be Applied to Accomplish That Sequence of Events? Application of the means to achieve the strategic ends will be a critical operational challenge to the naval expeditionary force commander. In this regard, designation of a focus of main effort is an important aspect of operational

design, and ensures that the element of the force most critical to success, with which the commander expects to achieve a decision, is allocated sufficient resources to achieve the decision.³⁹

This means rethinking traditional roles of critical assets of the naval expeditionary force. In many cases, the Marines will be the operational focus of main effort, in the conduct of ground operations. Accordingly, as Commander Terry Pierce outlines, the role of the carrier, a tremendously potent and versatile component of a naval expeditionary force, may change to support of the Marine Air-Ground Task Force, by first gaining air superiority, then providing strike or close air support to the ground effort.⁴⁰ On the other hand, the carrier itself may be the focus of main effort as it ensures battlespace dominance or projects power.

What Is the Likely Cost or Risk to the Force? Joint operations on the littoral are fraught with peril and risk. Though threats abound, the operational commander can reduce risk and protect his critical vulnerability through two key concepts of operational design: operational fires and Operational Maneuver From the Sea.

The white paper emphasizes command, control, and surveillance capabilities as a means to "enable domination of the battle space and power projection...". This translates to the focused employment of operational intelligence in order to determine the location and nature of the threats to the expeditionary force. Subsequently, the precise application of operational fires in the form of Tomahawk missiles, carrier based aviation, or even long range raids by Marines or special operations forces, may be employed to destroy or neutralize the threat.

The Marine Corps has adopted maneuver warfare as its doctrine; its maritime variant is called Operational Maneuver From the Sea (OMFTS), which considers not only land but also the ocean as maneuver space. As was done at Tinian, OMFTS seeks to exploit the mobility of a seaborne force to seamlessly project power through gaps, or weaknesses, in the enemy's defenses, which are determined by "intelligence pull" to determine exactly where friendly strength can be thrown against enemy weakness.⁴¹

Contrasted with traditional amphibious operations, wherein the ship-to-shore movement commenced within sight of the shoreline, future landings, employing the Landing Craft, Air Cushioned, (LCAC), CH-53E, and forthcoming MV-22, may initiate from 35-60 nautical miles from shore, and continue not initially to the traditional force beachhead, but to objectives farther inland. If a buildup ashore is desired, a beachhead can be seized as a subsequent objective.

Is OMFTS a conceptual delusion? Clearly not. Its principles were brilliantly pioneered in 1988 and 1989 by the then 5th Marine Expeditionary Brigade and Amphibious Group 3 during the KERNAL BLITZ series of exercises conducted at Camp Pendleton, California. KERNAL BLITZ was a free play, force-on-force exercise wherein a Marine infantry battalion, as the "enemy", was tasked to defend against an amphibious assault. At sea, the amphibious force developed a concept known as "multi-option, late decision"; instead of focusing exclusively on a single beach, plans for a night landing were drawn up for each of the potential landing beaches. The decision on which plan to use would be delayed until the last possible hour, based

upon intelligence reports as to which beach was the least heavily defended. The concept was executed flawlessly. Initially employing helicopter borne troops, and LCACs carrying highly mobile and potent Light Armored Vehicles (LAV), the landing force crossed the high water mark at a virtually undefended beach, achieving total surprise, and ultimately collapsed the "enemy" defense from within.⁴²

CHAPTER 4

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Recommendations. Analysis of past models of maritime operational art, together with current capabilities, and future initiatives, reveals several imperatives relative to operational implementation of "...From the Sea".

(1) As Commander Pierce points out, in discussing the role of carriers in littoral operations, "naval aviators must be soldiers, too."⁴³ Navy officers must be intimately familiar with Marine doctrine and procedures. Equally important, Marine officers must become knowledgeable in Navy organization, and key Navy warfighting concepts such as the doctrine for composite warfare.

(2) Lingering doubts and self-serving interpretations relative to the intent of the white paper must be categorically rejected. All communities in the naval service must demonstrate the adaptability and teamwork required to operationally implement its concepts. Traditional roles for centerpiece platforms such as the carrier must be objectively and honestly evaluated. New doctrine must developed, operationally tested, and systematically exercised.

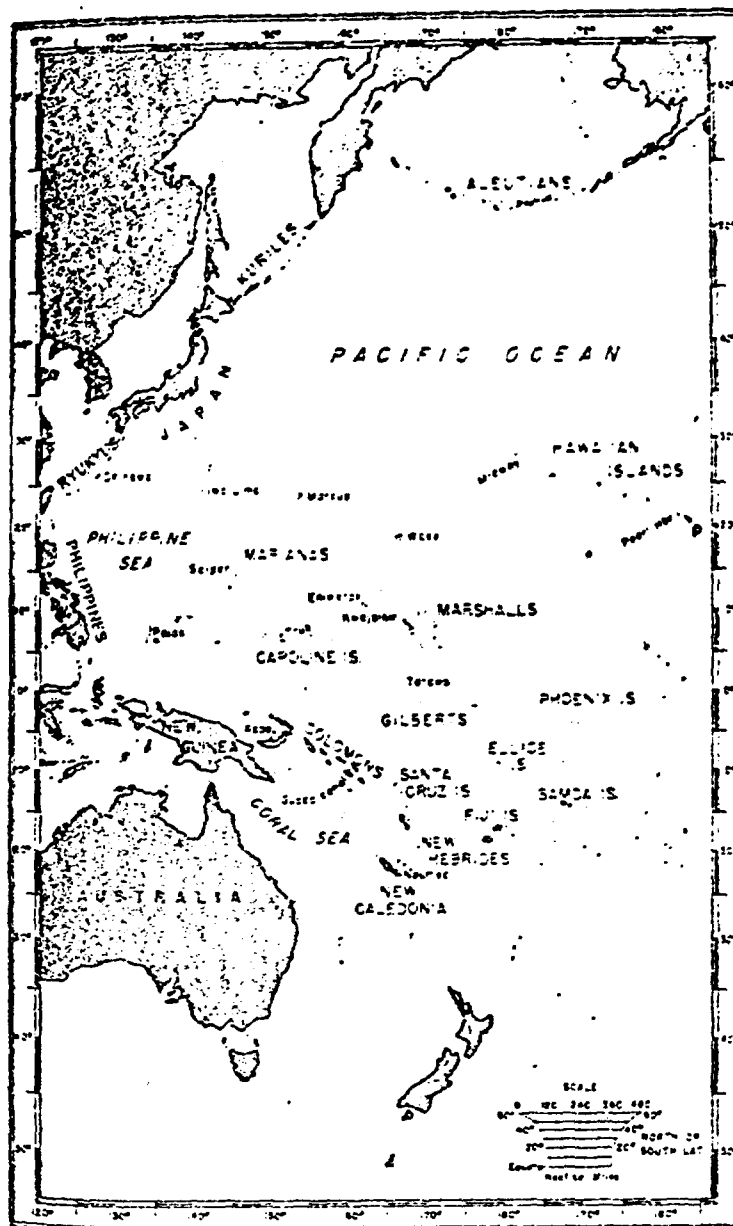
(3) Means must be made available to achieve the operational and strategic ends. Force structure decisions must unequivocally support the strategic intent of "...From the Sea", lest it become meaningless. Clearly, much needed enhancements to naval gunfire support, mine clearing, capability, and amphibious lift are all absolutely vital towards operational implementation of "...From the Sea."

(4) Exercises such as KERNAL BLITZ, which encouraged and fostered innovative operational and tactical thought must continue. Maritime maneuver warfare and OMFTS will become a reality only if we train as we will fight.

Conclusions. Since the end of the Cold War, the utility and value of naval forces has been proven numerous times in varied circumstances ranging from non-combatant evacuations to disaster relief to combat operations. Furthermore, the constantly evolving world order continues to portend ill-defined threats , regional concerns, and questionable stability, further underscoring the need for the versatility and uniqueness of naval forces. Compounding the issue is the United States' rejection of neo-isolationism, and its stated intent to remain engaged in world affairs in support of national interests.

With the pronouncement of "...From the Sea", the Navy and Marine Corps have publicly, radically, and doctrinally "crossed the Rubicon", and have proclaimed the intention and ability to dominate battlespace and to project power "...From the Sea" in support of national interests. Unmistakably, the eyes of the nation will be focused on the naval service as it operates in the littorals in future crises and conflicts. The Navy and Marine Corps must, without fail, be able to implement the vision outlined in "...From the Sea" to achieve operational and strategic objectives whenever and wherever tasked.

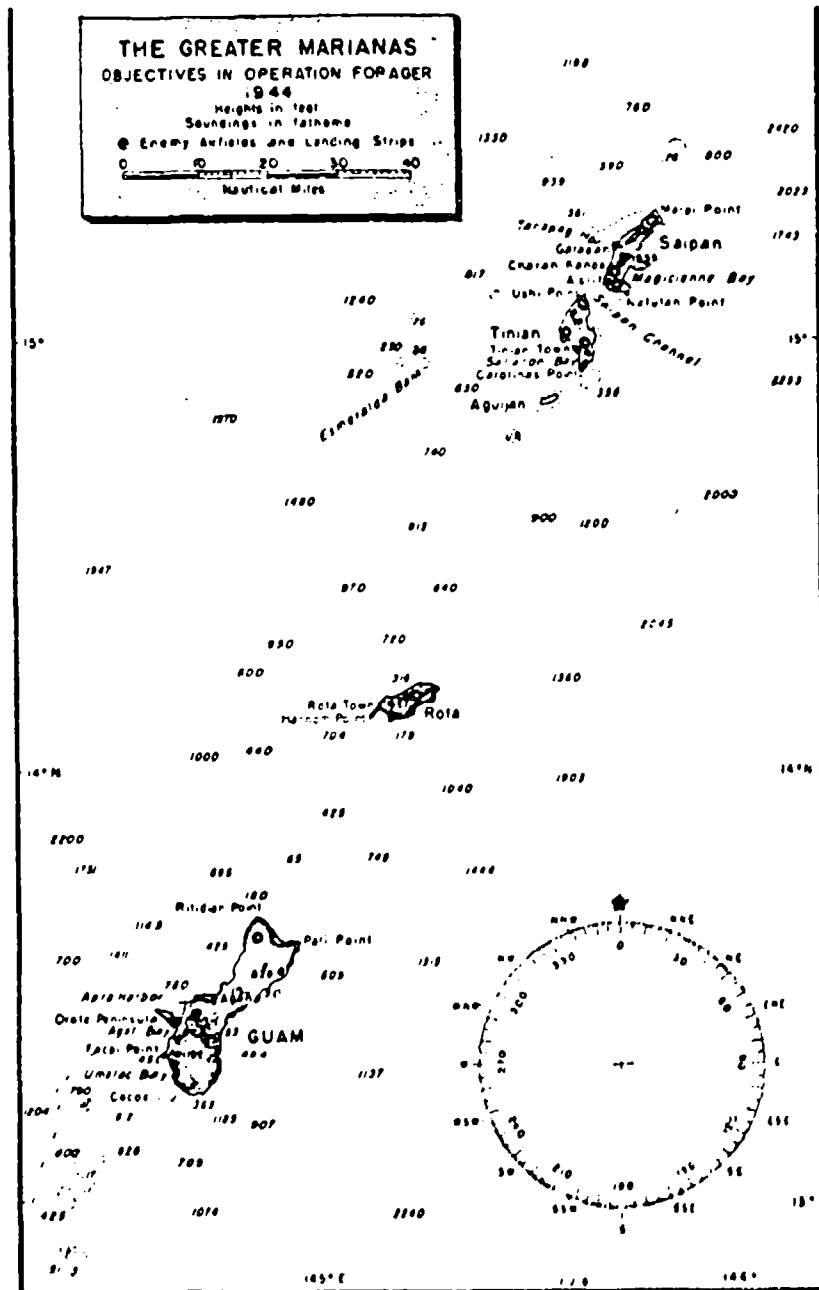
FIGURE 1
THE CENTRAL AND WESTERN PACIFIC



Source: Isley and Crowl, The U. S. Marines and Amphibious War, p. 75.

FIGURE 2

THE GREATER MARIANAS



Source: Samuel Morison, History of United States Naval Operations in World War II, Volume 8, New Guinea and the Marianas, p.163.

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